MAINE PUBLIC HEALTH ALERT NETWORK SYSTEM



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**ADVISORY - Important Information **

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TO: All Childcare; All City and County Health Departments; All Healthcare;

Maine Emergency Management Association; Maine Medical Association; Northern New England Poison Center; All Public Health; Public Safety and

First Responders; All Regional Resource Centers; State and Federal

Agencies

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Air Quality Alert

Ground-level ozone concentrations are expected to reach unhealthy levels for the Southwest Coastal region (Kittery through Boothbay Harbor) on Wednesday according to the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). Interior areas (Sanford through Bangor) and the Mid-Coast (Pemaquid through Acadia) are expected to have Moderate levels of ozone. Further away from the coast air quality should remain in the Good range.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recently revised the national ozone standard from 84 ppb to 75 ppb. At the same time, the Air Quality Index (AQI) for ozone was revised to reflect the new lower standard.

At high ozone levels, individuals suffering from a respiratory disease such as asthma, children, and healthy active adults can experience reduced lung function and irritation. When this happens, individuals may notice a shortness of breath, coughing, throat irritation, and/or experience an uncomfortable sensation in their chest.

Some actions you can take to protect your health during periods of unhealthy air quality include:

- Avoid strenuous activity, such as jogging, during mid-day.
- Close windows and circulate indoor air with a fan or air conditioner.
- Avoid using aerosol products such as cleaners, paints, and other lung irritants.
- Give yourself a break! Take it easy!

Ground level ozone is formed by chemical reactions between nitrogen oxides (NOx), volatile organic compounds (VOCs), and sunlight. Man-made sources of NOx and VOCs include automobiles, trucks and buses, large combustion and industrial sources such as power generating facilities, consumer products such as paints and cleaners, and gas-powered lawn and garden equipment.

Citizens can take the following actions to help reduce emissions that contribute to the formation of ozone:

- > Conserve electricity.
- ➤ Choose a cleaner commute, such as carpooling or using public transportation.
- > Defer the use of gas-powered lawn and garden equipment until after dusk.
- ➤ Limit idling of vehicles.
- > Refuel cars and trucks after dusk.
- Combine errands and reduce vehicle trips.
- ➤ Use environmentally-friendly paints and cleaning products with low VOC content.

For more information call DEP's toll free ozone hotline at 1-800-223-1196 or visit DEP's air quality web site by going to <u>MaineDEP.com</u> and select 'Maine Air Quality Forecast.'